



# Maine Forest Service Ice Storm Newsletter #4 December 21, 1998



## **THE FOREST STEWARDSHIP ASSISTANCE PROGRAM "PLEDGE"**

We've received many calls from both consultants and landowners regarding the pledges required when a landowner signs up for cost-share assistance and as part of the management plan. These pledges are part of the federal regulations that set up the Forest Stewardship Assistance Program and the Stewardship Incentive Program. In order to meet the federal guidelines for receiving funding, both pledges must be signed by the landowner.

## **FOREST STEWARDSHIP ASSISTANCE STEWARDSHIP INCENTIVE PROGRAM UPDATES**

As of December 15, 1998, the Maine Forest Service has approved approximately 1500 applications for cost-share assistance for management planning under the Forest Stewardship Assistance Program. These applications cover more than 190,000 acres of land in the ice storm footprint, encumbering \$2,000,000.00 (YES, that's 2 million dollars!). Applications are still arriving at the Forest Service at a rate of 15-20 per day. Turn around time for approval is about 3 weeks.

Requests for assistance for ice storm cleanup practices under the Stewardship Incentive Program are coming in at a steady rate. More than \$588,000 in practices have been approved so far. The most popular practices have been SIP5, components 47ICE and 408 (Access corridor construction and associated erosion control practices) and SIP9, component 568 (cleanup of trails).

After the first of the year we will be sending a letter out to all landowners approved for new Stewardship Plans or updates reminding them that they are eligible for funding for non-commercial ice storm mitigation practices under SIP. Many landowners are waiting for their plans to be completed before they sign up.

The deadline for sign-up for ice storm clean up practices under SIP is September 30, 2000. All practices must be completed by September 15, 2001.

## **ARE CHANGES COMING TO THE MAINE TREE GROWTH TAX LAW?**

The April 1, 1999 deadline for forest management and harvest plans to meet the requirements of the Maine Tree Growth Tax Law is under fire. Much discussion has revolved around whether the deadline should be extended or not, and if so, how. Many landowners who waited to have their plans done are now finding that it is nearly impossible to find a forester who is available before April 1. Many consultants are telling landowners that they will not be able to get to them until sometime next summer.

State Representative Walter Gooley of Farmington is submitting legislation to extend the deadline. Maine Forest Service Director Chuck Gadzik met recently with representatives from SWOAM and the Maine Municipal Association to discuss this issue. The consensus of this meeting was that these three organizations would support an extension, but with some restrictions: Extend the deadline to December 31, 1999, BUT for a landowner to receive this extension he will have to have a signed written contract with a licensed forester to complete the plan, and the plan must be completed within 1 year of signing the contract. This could effectively extend the deadline until December 31, 2000 for some landowners.

The legislature will have to work quickly on any legislation that changes the Tree Growth forest management and harvest plan deadline. They will need to enact emergency legislation so that any changes go into effect before the current April 1, 1999 deadline.

## **MAINE FOREST SERVICE "ICE LINE" PHASED OUT**

The Maine Forest Service is phasing out its "Ice Line" (1-877-ICE TREE) as of January 1, 1999. The number of calls received on the line dropped dramatically after September 1. More than 2000 calls requesting information on ice storm assistance were received. The Forest Service's regular toll free telephone number is still in service. Within the State of Maine, call 1-800-367-0223.